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Thais Given U.S. Apology for Hoax

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BANGKOK, Thailand (AP) — A CIA agent sent the Thai government a bogus cease-fire offer in the name of a Thai Communist insurgent leader, the U.S. Embassy said yesterday. The hoax was said to have been discovered because of an over-cautious errand boy.

Informed sources said the letter was posted in November from Sakon Nakhon, a province capital 350 miles northeast of Bangkok in an area where U.S. reports say 1,600 to 2,000 armed rebels operate.

The letter was reported to have contained a cease-fire offer in return for local autonomy in "liberated areas" near the Laos border.

The agent, reliably reported to be an American, was said to have hoped the letter would increase defections to the government. It was not made clear how he expected this to happen.

THE U.S. EMBASSY, which admitted the affair after three Bangkok newspapers published the story, said, "The incident of the cease-fire letter was a regrettable, unauthorized initiative."

It added that U.S. Ambassador William R. Kintner, who presented his credentials only Nov. 29, "has directed categorically that no American official be involved in any activity which could be interpreted as interference in Thai internal affairs."

The incident was especially embarrassing to Kint-

ner, who has been trying to play down his former career as a U.S. Army officer, including two years with the Central Intelligence Agency in Washington as a planning specialist on paramilitary activities in 1950-1952.

Student militants denounced Kintner as a CIA agent after his arrival and urged that the government watch him carefully.

The embassy statement said the incident "has been discussed with the appropriate Thai officials," but gave no further.

HOWEVER, informed sources said an account of the affair in the Bangkok newspaper The Nation was accurate.

The Nation cited "an unimpeachable source" as saying the CIA had apologized to Thai authorities for the affair and that the agent who sent the letter — code-named "Lion" — actually had contacted insurgents in the northeast jungles and had sent the hoax letter with good intentions hoping to win more Communist defections.

The letter was signed "Chamras" — the code name of a Central Committee member of the Communist party of Thailand in the northeast, The Nation reported.

It said the agent put no return address on the letter to Premier Sanya Thammasak, but the boy who mailed the letter had it registered and the government traced the registration to the agent's address in Sakon Nakhon.

THE HEAD OF Thailand's Communist suppression organization, Lt. Gen. Saiyud Kerdphol, had previously termed the letter's offer ridiculous and informed sources had expressed suspicion of its authenticity, saying it was not consistent with Communist strategy.

On Dec. 9 the Thai government radio station reported that Communists in nine northern provinces had been distributing leaflets with essentially the same promise — cooperation with the new civilian government in return for autonomy behind "the Communist line."

Officials were skeptical of this proposal too and said they were investigating.

On Dec. 24 Defense Minister Dawee Chullasap told reporters that the cabinet was considering proposing a cease-fire to the Communists and subsequently the government did announce that it would give amnesty to insurgents captured this year and to all who want to surrender.

The government yesterday took another step in its new approach to counter insurgency by dissolving the communism suppression organization and decentralizing its functions.

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